

Exodus 31

I. Divine Empowerment: The Calling of Bezaleel (Exodus 31:1-11)

In the opening of chapter 31, the Lord speaks to Moses regarding the construction of the Tabernacle. He specifically calls Bezaleel (son of Uri, grandson of Hur) and fills him with the Spirit of God. This divine filling manifested as wisdom, understanding, and supernatural skill in every manner of workmanship—from goldsmithing to stone cutting and wood carving.

The Nature of Innate Talent

It is a marvel to see people who possess innate, God-given abilities. Whether it is a natural ear for music, a gift for linguistics, or a mind for mathematics, these talents are "encoded" into a person's being.

- **The Gift vs. The Giver:** These innate abilities are a gift from God. What we do with them is our responsibility. It is a tragedy when a person takes a talent meant for God's glory and prostituted it for personal gain or selfish profit.
- **The Body of Christ:** This is the beauty of the "body" concept. We are collectively gifted so that every need can be met. Just as the Tabernacle needed Bezaleel's artistry and Aholiab's skill, the modern church needs the diverse talents of its members. When we pool our resources and anoint them for His service, our work finds its greatest release and fulfillment.

A Note on Scholarship and the King James Version: One of the original translators of the King James Bible was a linguistic prodigy who could read and write Hebrew by age five and converse in forty-five languages. This caliber of scholarship is often unfairly maligned today.

Many modern translations rely on the Westcott and Hort text, which prioritized the "most ancient" manuscripts (like the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*). However, there is a strong case to be made for the Textus Receptus (used for the KJV and NKJV), which aligns more closely with the ancient church of Antioch—a community dedicated to maintaining the purity of the Scriptures. Some modern revisions have subtly altered or omitted verses regarding the deity of Jesus Christ; hence, we must remain vigilant in our study of the Word.

II. The Sabbath: A Sign and a Shadow (Exodus 31:12-18)

The Lord then reminds Moses of the importance of the Sabbath. It was established as a "perpetual covenant" between God and the nation of Israel—a sign for their generations that He is the Lord who sanctifies them.

The Law vs. The New Covenant

In Exodus, the penalty for working on the Sabbath was death. However, it is vital to distinguish between the Covenant of Israel and the Gentile Church:

1. **A Jewish Covenant:** The Sabbath was specifically given as a sign to Israel (v. 17).

2. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15): When early Jewish believers tried to place the Law on Gentile converts, the Apostles (led by Peter and James) refused to bind them to this "yoke of bondage."
3. The Apostolic Instruction: Paul the Apostle clarifies in Romans 14 and Colossians 2 that we are not to be judged regarding "Sabbath days" or "holy days." These were merely shadows of things to come; the substance is Christ.

III. Entering the True Rest

While the Jewish Sabbath signified a cessation from physical labor, the people rarely entered into spiritual rest. Today, Jesus Christ is our Sabbath.

- The Finished Work: To enter the true Sabbath is to cease from our own labors—meaning we stop trying to save ourselves through works of the hand or law-keeping.
- Resting Where God Rests: God is resting in the finished sacrifice of His Son. Therefore, we must rest where God rests.

"I have ceased from my own labors; I have entered into the finished work of Jesus Christ. As far as my salvation is concerned, I'm resting that Christ is going to take care of it."

Conclusion: The Finger of God (Exodus 31:18)

The chapter concludes with the Lord giving Moses the **two tables of testimony**—tables of stone written with the very finger of God. These stones served as the foundation of the Law, but as believers, we now find that Law written on our hearts and its fulfillment found in the person of Jesus.

Comparison: The Old Covenant Sabbath vs. The New Covenant Rest

To better understand the transition from the Mosaic Law to the grace found in Christ, it is helpful to contrast the physical requirements given to Israel with the spiritual fulfillment experienced by the Church.

Feature	The Old Covenant Sabbath (Exodus 31)	The New Covenant Rest (Hebrews 4 / Colossians 2)
Primary Focus	Physical cessation from all labor and work.	Spiritual reliance on the finished work of Christ.
The Beneficiary	Specifically given as a sign to the nation of Israel.	Available to all believers (Jew and Gentile) in the Church.
The Penalty	Physical death for those who defiled it.	Spiritual unrest for those who try to earn salvation by works.
Duration	A 24-hour period (the seventh day of the week).	A perpetual, every-day state of being "in Christ."
The Symbolism	A shadow of things to come (Colossians 2:17).	The substance and the reality (Jesus Christ).

Entering Into "His Rest"

As discussed in the commentary, the Jewish Sabbath was a beautiful picture, but it was never the final destination. The author of Hebrews explains that if the physical Sabbath (or even the entry into the Promised Land) had been the ultimate rest, God would not have spoken of "another day" later on.

- **Ceasing from Works:** Just as God rested on the seventh day from His creative works, we rest from our "religious works." We stop trying to pile up good deeds to outweigh our sins.
- **Confidence in the Sacrifice:** We rest in the fact that the blood of Jesus is sufficient. When God looks at the sacrifice of His Son, He is satisfied; when we trust in that same sacrifice, we find the same satisfaction and peace.

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." —
Hebrews 4:10